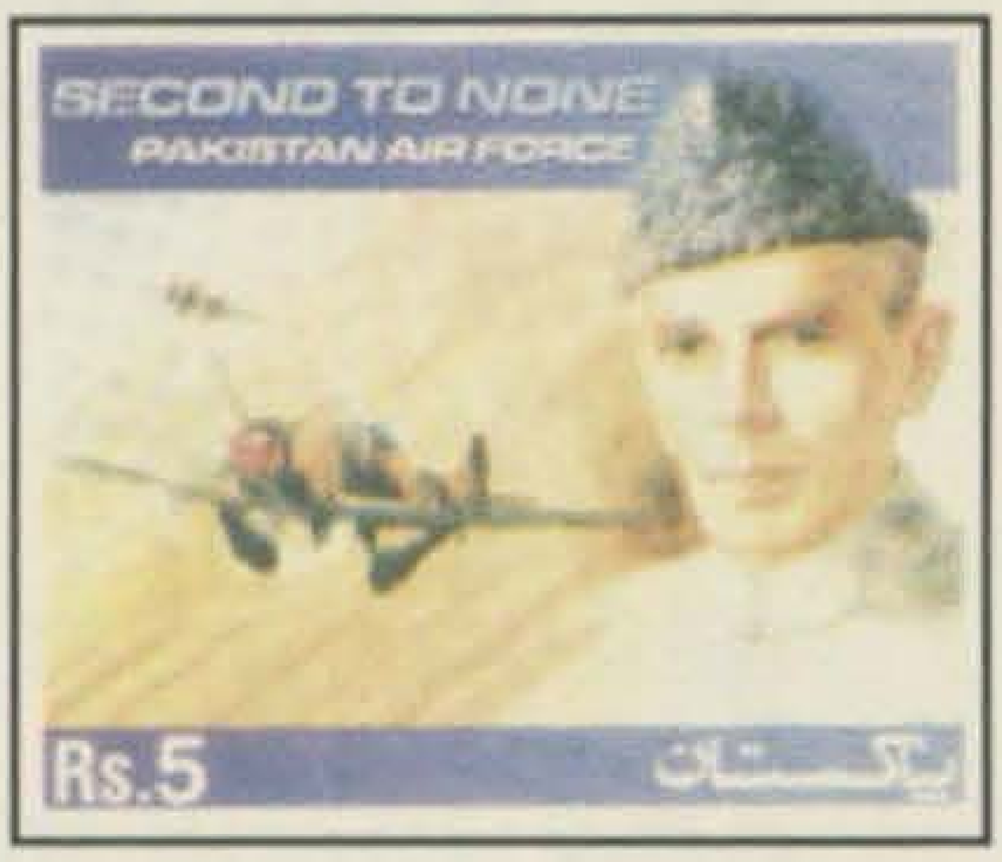


Quaid-i-Azam Post Office Ziarat

By

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BUILDING PAKISTAN



"If you all continue in that spirit and work as comrades, as true Pakistanis selflessly, Pakistan has nothing to fear.

"One thing more. I am persuaded to say this because during my talks with one or two very high-ranking Officers I discovered that they did not know the implications of the Oath taken by the troops of Pakistan. Of course, an oath is only a matter of form; what is more important is the true spirit and the heart.

Address to the Officers of the
Staff College Quetta June 14, 1948

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Major General (R) Agha Masood Hasan, Chairman, Pakistan Postal Services Management Board, who elevated Ziarat Post Office by renaming it as Quaid-I-Azam Post Office on April 5, 2004.



Major General (R) Agha Masood Hasan
Chairman, Pakistan Postal Services Management Board

Ziarat Post Office served Father of the Nation, Quaid-I-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to his entire satisfaction when he was shifted to Ziarat on medical grounds in 1948. Pakistan Post in those days known as Pakistan Post, Telegraph & Telephone Department made special arrangements and Ziarat Post Office rendered a prestigious service on this historical event.







In spite of the fact Ziarat Post Office served the Quaid and his staff with utmost dedication and a sense of duty, yet it never received due acknowledgement on this account. While recalling the poetry of mystic poet William Blake (1751-1827) , I do feel that he could perceive sincere feelings and devoted services such as rendered by Ziarat Post Office which never sought to tell its unprecedented service on the historical event without a word of praise;

"NEVER SEEK TO TELL THY LOVE

LOVE THAT NEVER TOLD CAN BE

FOR THE GENTLE WIND DOTH MOVE

SILENTLY, INVISIBILY"

The Nation, in particular, hardly knows that Ziarat Post Office served Quaid-I-Azam during his stay in Ziarat from 17th June, 1948 till his departure for good on 11th September, 1948. Although Ziarat Residency is being considered as a "National Monument" wherein Quaid-I-Azam stayed along with his sister, Madr-I-Millat Miss Fatima Jinnah during this period. The service provided by this Post with a crusader's spirit, has never been considered at any forum.



The old name of Ziarat in the lore of history was "Ghows-Key" too difficult to be pronounced by a non-Pashtoon. This beautiful valley of Juniper wood was considered as the second largest Juniper Jungle in the world. Abandoned in 'Ephedrine (Oman) bush'. Dowtani, Sarangzai and Panezai tribes were inhabitants of the area.



Map of Ziarat

Eleven Kilometers away from Ghows-Key, there is a shrine of Mulla Tahir, a saint of Sarangzai tribe, who was a faithful disciple of Mian Abdul Hakeem Kandhari as a gesture of respect called as "Nanna Sahib". Mulla Tahir was generally known as "Baba Kharwari". In secluded tribal society, people could hardly count more than twenty, which was their unit of measurement. Twenty "SHAAL" (kilos) were called "SHAALY" and four Shalli made a Kharwar (Eighty Kilos). Therefore, Kharwar denoted maximum of any item. So Kharwari Baba did mean " a saint on the zenith of spiritual power".



Ziarat Residency

Rights of this valley 'Ghows-Key' (some 81 acres of land) along with water resources were purchased from the local tribes by the British colonialists for rupees fourteen thousand in lump sum. In 1886, 'Ghows-Key' was selected as summer headquarters of the British Balochistan.

MAIL ENTERS IN QUETTA 1839 A.D.



Sir Robert Sandeman, a clever statesman objected the name 'Ghows-Key' fearning lest irrelevant, irresponsible persons should avoiding calling it whiskey, changed the name of 'Ghows-Key' as

Ziarat. Ziarat which means a shrine is the name of a spot on the watershed about Twelve Kilometers to the East forming the Eastern limit of the immense area which is drained into chappar Rift, but the name has now been so generally applied to the little hill station, as it was accepted finally and thankfully being for easier to pronounce then "Ghows-Key', without any ambiguity.

Imperial Gazetteer of Indian Balochistan series of 1906, with exception of a fdew blunders already attributed to alien Britishers, provides a vivid view of Ziarat.

"Ziarat is a sanatorium and the provincial summer Headquarters of the Balochistan Agency. It lies in Shahrigh Tehsil of the Sibi District and is the residence of the Political Agency from May to October. Ziarat is most easily reached from Kachh Station by a cart road (32-3/4 miles). It is also connected with Loralai (59-3/4 miles) by a cart road. There is a good bridle path to the Mangi Railway Station (21 miles). Hill paths also lead to Shahrigh (22 miles) by the Wuch Aghbargai Kotal and the Domiara hill. It was first visited and selected as a sanatorium in 1883. The place is practically deserted during the winter owning to the severe cold and heavy snow".

Access to Ziarat in the early decades of the century were through Mangi Railway Station some 21 miles from Ziarat and about 30 miles from Kachh Railway Station, which does not exist now.

Ziarat seasonal combined Sub Post Office was established somewhere in 1906. Renowned Residency made of wood and stones was erected by the contractors Messrs Sorabji and Amrisksing in 1890-91 at a cost of rupees thirty-five thousand, a huge amount of course considering those old days.

QUETTA GPO - 1925



The Post Office building was damaged in a disastrous earthquake in 1930s. Four tin huts were constructed to accommodate the Post Office and staff as a consequence.



Quaid-i-Azam with a group of Quetta students

The Indian Post and Telegraphs Department issued orders to reconstruct the Ziarat Post Office along with residential quarters thereafter.

Approval of the project was issued by the Deputy Accountant General P&T Nagpur in 1940. Total cost of the approved project was rupees thirteen thousand but actual cost raised to 14,341 and 6 annas. Possession of the building was taken on 29th September, 1940. Construction work was carried by the Garrison Engineer (Civil) MES, Quetta. Old Tin huts were purchased by the Political Agent Sibi for rupees seven hundred. Mr. Fazal Ellahi was holding the charge in those days. Formal inauguration was proposed by the Director P&T , Karachi through a telegraph message on 6th July, 1940 which read as follows:-

"Please arrange opening ceremony of New Post Office building at Ziarat by Political Agent Sibi". This proposal was, however, dropped subsequently. The same single storey building made of white stone served the Quaid-I-Azam".



Quetta GPO provided logistic support to Ziarat

Inspection Report of 25th May, 1941 mentions:

"Instruments and fittings are in order. The average traffic is about twenty messages per day".

Last Inspection of Ziarat seasonal combined Sub Post Office under British Administration was carried out by the Inspector of Post Offices, Eastern Balochistan Sub Division Headquarters at Loralai on 31st October, 1946. Mr. Sangat Singh Signaller was holding the charge of the office. Mr. Abdul Hamid was working as a clerk. The rest of the staff consisting of a Postman, a telegraph messenger and a boy messenger. Mail exchange between Quetta and Ziarat used to be daily. This mail was carried by a lorry of a private transporter Gulab Singh & Sons. The color of the lorry was, of course, post office red.

Non-repairable frame of that lorry was a plying spot till my childhood. We used to play in that lorry. Chassis and engine of the lorry was missing, probably taken away by some one.



Counter of Ziarat Post Office which served staff of Quaid-I-Azam

Mail was dispatched from Ziarat to Quetta at 09:00 hours daily and due bags were received in Ziarat at 14:30 hours and local delivery of mail was effected at 15:30 hours, under a single delivery system. Two letter boxes were installed at Ziarat in those days.





Mr. Phillips was DTO, he was over all responsible for trunk lines. The telegraph instruments were not in a good shape till 1946 as evident from an Inspection Report.



Commemorative postage stamp issued on 25th December, 1976 to mark the Birth Centenary of Quaid-I-Azam

"All the four instruments supplied on this line and the extensions are extremely old. One that I noticed in the Residency and other in the house of the Secretary were also damaged".

Improvement was also made by implementation of another order:

"Working hours of the office were 0800 to 0900 and them from 1100 to 1700 hours. Change of office timings were informed to the Secretary to the Agency to the Governor General".

After the emergence of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Feroz Khan was the first to assume charge of Postmaster. The first visit of the office was conducted by the Director , Post and Telegraph on 10th July, 1947 who came all the way from Karachi. First Annual Inspection was carried out on 10th October, 1947 by the Superintendent Post Office, Balochistan/Quetta contents of Inspection Report carried shock-effect of bifurcation. There were no interesting remarks in the Inspection Report:

"Three lanterns and two lamps are out of order and should be replaced by new ones".



Status quo of Ziarat as a seasonal summer headquarters was also maintained after emergence of Pakistan. For a period of five months each year starting from May all sort of activities were observed in Ziarat. October brings death-knell to all Governmental activities, shifting of offices to Sibi, closure of restaurants and suspension of transport turn the place into a haunted town. Even local tribes, due to severe cold use to be migrate to Harnai, Khost and Shahrigh crossing green Juniper Mountains along with their hoards, bag and baggage. This centuries old tradition was in vogue till the recent times. Provision of electricity and availability of other amenities nevertheless curbed this tendency, much inconvenience

but quite romantic. I particularly used to enjoy shifting of the family in my early school days by road to Sibi some 283 Kilometers away from Ziarat.

Shifting of Quaid-I-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to Ziarat on medical grounds was under consideration in 1948. His serious protracted illness was kept secret from the Nation due to various reasons. Nevertheless, information of his proposed stay at Ziarat was passed to the Posts and Telegraphs Department, which made hectic efforts to ensure provision of best possible services to the Foundation of Pakistan. There were three postal administrative circles in Pakistan in those days, headed by Postmasters General viz the East Pakistan Circle and the two Circles in West Pakistan.



Commemorative postage stamps issued on 14th August, 1976 to mark the Birth Centenary of Quaid-I-Azam

Ziarat Post Office fell under the administrative jurisdiction of Sindh-Balochistan Circle, with Headquarters at Karachi. The administrative head for the Balochistan used to be a Divisional Superintendent Post Offices. Working at his Headquarters at Quetta, the Divisional Superintendent for Post Offices used to exercise slack control of the Post Office. Balochistan Postal Division was further

sub-divided into Postal Sub Divisions, headed by Inspector Post Offices. Seasonal combined Sub Post Office Ziarat was under the immediate supervision of Inspector of Post Offices, Eastern Balochistan Sub Division Headquarters at Loralai. Combined Post Office is classified as a Post Office performing telegraph service in addition to its normal postal functions. The Inspecting Officers spends an addition day at such offices for checking of telegraph work. The Telegraph Branch was termed as "Traffic Branch".

Information relating to Quaid-I-Azam's stay at Ziarat due to its reasons was kept strictly confidential, restricted to administrative circles only.

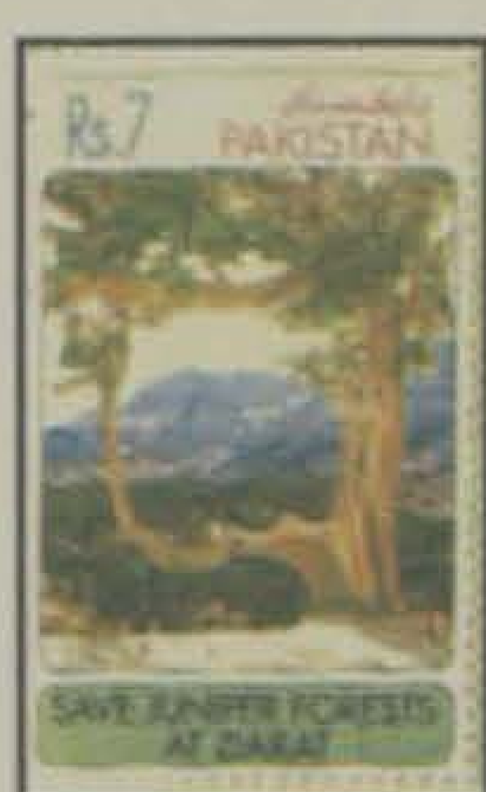


Postal authorities intend to make Ziarat Post Office an epitome of height not because it is located 7,993 feet high from sea level, but on account of its performance, efficiency, flawless service, regularity and punctuality. With a pledge to serve Quaid-I-Azam for above the datum line of satisfaction, the dexterous staff made optimum use of resources to provide ideal service on that particular occasion of historic importance. They were conscious of the importance of their assignment. By virtue of sincere efforts and by dint of hard work they proved their worth. They did not believe the proverb, "To err is human". They at all made no mistake, no omission

even by human error at any level or on any occasion. This is evident from the fact that no complaint for any omission or commission on their part was ever registered. This perfection of efficiency is really enviable and quite rare in the Oppertional Offices.

Director, P&T proceeded from Karachi on 28th May, 1948 to supervise arrangements, evaluate resources to ensure perfect mail arrangements. He was assisted by Superintendent Post Offices, Balochistan and Inspector of Post Offices, Eastern Sub Division, Loralia.

His Inspection Remarks recorded in the order book of Ziarat Post Office carried historical importance are reproduced below due to importance attributed to the occasion:





ZIARAT

1. "Visited Ziarat seasonal combined office on 20th may, 1948. Mr. Faiz Ali is the Sub Postmaster. This office opened on the 28th April, 1948 and will continue till about the end of October.

2. The sanctioned strength is 1(one) S.P.M. (Sub Postmaster) 1 (one) Postman and 1 (one) Messenger. When the A.G.G. (Agent to the Governor General) is recessing here, the office is usually strengthened by 1 (one) Clerk and 1 (one) Boy Messenger. This year the Quaid-I-Azam will be honoring this

station by a visit. He is expected at Ziarat sometime in June and on his arrival it will be necessary to depute a telegraphist with a typewriter in place of the additional clerk for the office. All messages for the Quaid-I-Azam and A.G.G. should as far as possible be type written. Superintendent, I/C, C.T.O., Quetta on receipt of requisition from the S.P. Quetta will please depute a competent telegraphist who will remain at Ziarat for the whole of Quaid-I-Azam's stay at Ziarat.

3. This office has not been supplied with C Press message forms. About a 100 such forms should be supplied immediately by the Stock Depot and compliance intimated to me.

4. The height above the Seal level of the Post Office building (7993 feet) should be got painted over the façade in a prominent place.

5. I am glad that the Sub-Postmaster, Mr. Faiz Ali takes lively interest in his duties and keeps the office neat and tidy. I wish we had some more officials like him in our Department".

All necessary arrangements were made well in time. Quaid-I-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah arrived at Ziarat on 7th June, 1948 and stayed there till 11sth September, 1948 with an exception of few days to inaugurate State Bank of Pakistan and for pathological tests which was not feasible in Ziarat.





Letters, telegrams cluttered Post Office, delivery tables were pouring in from every nook and corner of the country and from

abroad. Telegraph messages were passed and received with dexterity, accuracy and speed. They were delivered without loss of time. A crusade spirit prevailed upon the Postal Staff of Ziarat Post Office. Ignored and scattered record of these prestigious services is traceable in different references such as Col. Dr. Ellahi Bukhsh's memories "Quaid-I-Azam Kay Akhri Ayyam (The Last Days of Quaid-I-Azam).

"We sent a telegraph from Ziarat Post Office to Pakistan High Commission in London and were expecting reply within twenty four hours". Important telegrams were also passed to Dr. M.A. Mistri and Mr. Hussain Ispahani. Ziarat Post Office also played a vital role in dispatch/delivery of medical reports/opinions of physicians such as of Dr. Riaz Ali Shah, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad and in particular of Col. Dr. Ellahi Buksh who was bade to reach Ziarat by 16th August, 1948.

Quaid-I-Azam was a man of principle. He could never afford to spare irresponsible behaviour. Once he conveyed his displeasure to his physician Col. Dr. Ellahi Baksh who could not come according to schedule at 0800 hours on 24th August, 1948:

"I expect punctuality at least from my physician". Quaid remarked in a calm but firmed manner.

Colonel took this mild admonish to heart and with honesty and courage he mentioned this unpleasant incident in his book. Nevertheless, this delay was compulsive due to sudden illness of his son.

Importance of Ziarat Post Office was enhanced to unbelievable lelevel being the only source of communication with Quaid-I-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Physicians never allowed his staff to put up all mail to him. This included newspapers and important letters. His staff was being served by the Post Office in a

courteous manner. Speedy messages were being handled with utmost care, speed and accuracy.

"Doctor insisted for woolen trousers and wrote to Karachi for immediate supply to 30 yards for Quaid-I-Azam". Col. Dr. Ellahi Bukhsh further wrote, " when he proceeded to Lahore due to urgency he felt happy that no message chased him from Ziarat Post Office".

"I was much relaxed to see that no telegram or telephone was received from Ziarat".

Postal staff was in touch with the A.D.C., and Military Secretary to Quaid-I-Azam to ascertain proper delivery of letter and parcel mail. Postal tradition never ends, generation after generation, they served with the same determination and commitment.

It is worth mentioning that the best office shield of Sindh-Balochistan Circle was also awarded to this office in 1964.

Balochistan was declared as a full fledged Postal Circle on 15th July, 1991. Mr. Nusratullah Khan took over the charge as the first Postmaster General of Balochistan. I had the honour to be the first ever Officer inducted in Postal Group for Balochistan, who assisted Mr. Nusratullah Khan. New administrative Postal Divisions were carved out. Ziarat Post Office, traditionally a part of Sibi, was included in Quetta Division. Subsequently, Ziarat was upgraded as a District on 26th July, 1991. Ziarat Post Office once a seasonal Post Office was ordered to work as full-fledged office since then. However, it is working as " Day Post Office The existence of a Night Post Office never justified".

Post Office business is being managed by one Sub Postmaster and one Postman who also clears three letter boxes

installed in Ziarat Town.

The office receives three due bags and dispatches two bags. Mail exchange through public transport is daily. Mail is delivered under single delivery system.

Services of Ziarat Post Office are still appreciable which requires further excursus. I pleaded the case of Ziarat Post Office for two decades. My articles in this regard appear in the leading newspapers, reputed journals including Urdu Digest, Dawn etc.

Realizing the historical importance and dignity of service attributed to Ziarat Post Office, Major General(R) Chairman, Pakistan Postal Services Management Board, elevated the status of the Post Office by declaring Ziarat Post Office as "Quaid-I-Azam Post Office' vide DGPPO letter No: Estt.16-4/2004, dated 5.4.2004. Ziarat Post by virtue of its devotion to a greater cause and love for Father of Nation be remembered ever. Love that can never be told makes the things important.

The people of Balochistan are thankful to Major General (R) Agha Masood Hasan, Chairman, Pakistan Postal Services Management Board for this kind gesture.







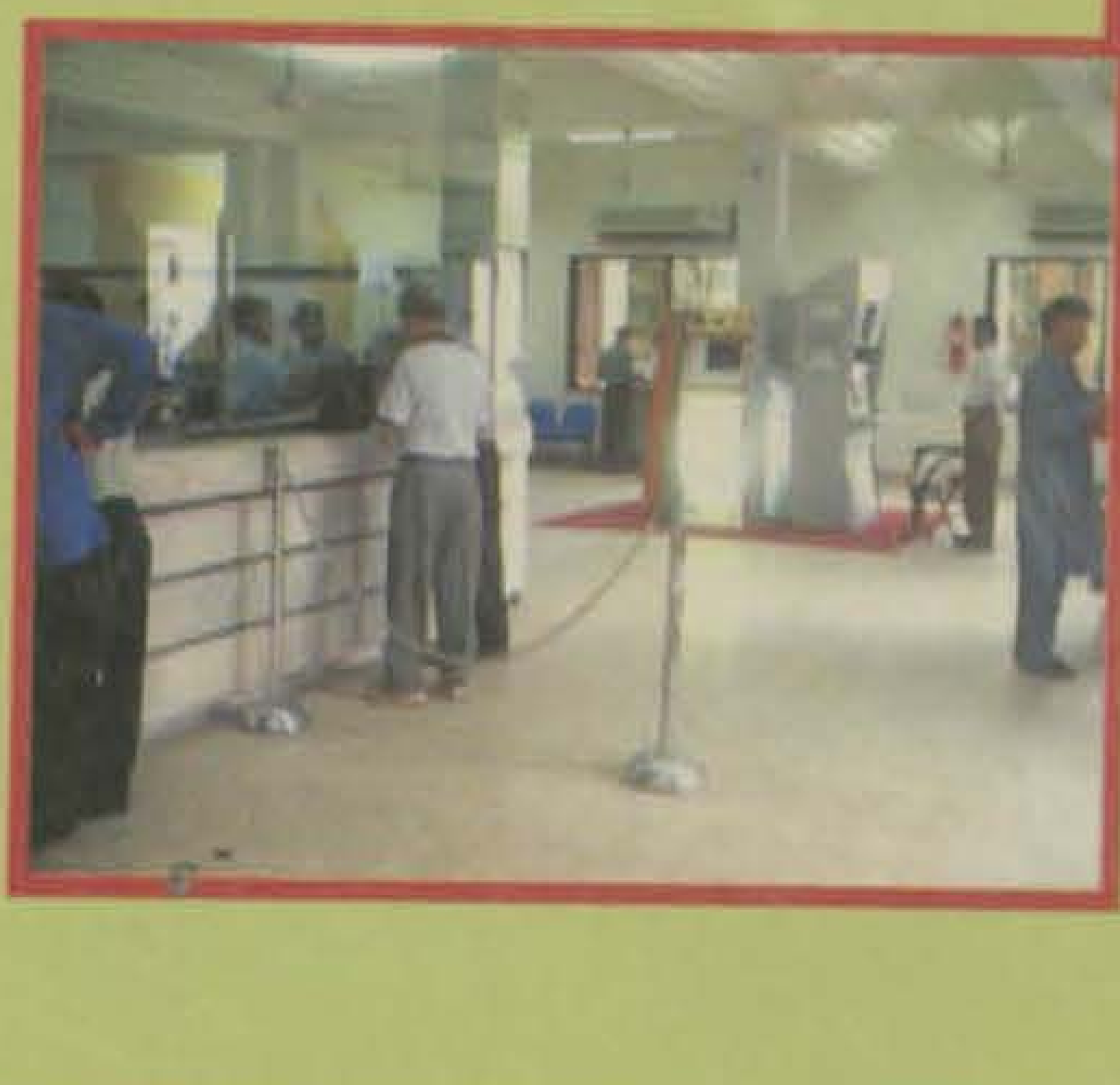


















PAKISTAN POST

COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS